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Cloak-And-Dagger Business

The international cloak-and-dagger business isn't what it used to be.

In the years that Allen W. Dulles has served as a leader in America's intelligence operations, the basic method of gathering secret information has changed from the classical person-to-person, word-of-mouth approach to one of using all the resources that modern science can offer.

Moreover, the traditional denial of spying has given way to open recognition of its importance. In fact, when his retirement as chief of the Central Intelligence agency was announced Wednesday, Mr. Dulles said quite bluntly: "In these troubled times the importance of intelligence is emphasized as essential to policy."

Mr. Dulles' retirement offers an ideal opportunity to consider whether another change in intelligence operations might not be in order. The CIA has been involved both in gathering top-secret information and in carrying out undercover operations. Perhaps it could perform its essential intelligence function better if the undercover operations were transferred elsewhere.

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